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TCS, INFY AMONG WORLD'S MOST VALUABLE I.T. BRANDS

Six Indian firms are among the world's fastest-growing IT Services brands, according to Brand Finance's new report

ACCENTURE STRONGEST IT SERVICES BRAND

Accenture has retained the title of world's most valuable and strongest IT services brand, with record brand value of $36.2 billion. Apart from TCS (2nd spot), Infosys (3rd), Wipro (7th), HCL (8th), Tech Mahindra (15th) and LTI (22nd) are the other Indian IT services companies on the London-based global brand valuation firm's top 25 list, released on Wednesday

U.S. TECH GIANT IBM PUSHED TO 4TH SLOT

- Both TCS (brand value $16.8 bn) and Infosys ($12.8 bn) have beaten IBM, whose value slipped to $10.6 bn after it hived off its managed infra services business as a new entity called Kyndryl
- A global turn to remote working as well as digitalisation facilitated expansion of IT services hubs within India | P10

Tik Tok

FASTEST GROWING BRAND IN THE WORLD WITH AN ASTOUNDING 215% GROWTH

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Azad readies to do an Amarinder

Expected to float party; won't have pre-poll pact with the BJP in J&K but would be open to alliance after elections

SHAHID FARIDI @ New Delhi

VETERAN Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad is all set to 'do an Amarinder' on the Congress party, albeit in a phased manner.

Highly placed sources said that Azad is ready to float a new political party in Jammu and Kashmir, where he had once headed a Congress-led coalition government as chief minister.

Azad's new political party would not enter into a formal pre-poll seat-sharing agreement with the BJP but would not shy away from a post-poll understanding if numbers so dictate, sources said.

He has already addressed a series of well-attended public meetings in Jammu & Kashmir. And a large number of his supporters from within the Congress party have resigned from their posts in J&K. While there has been speculation about BJP's support to Azad's outreach, the Congress leadership confirmed its suspicions about his activities by removing him from its central disciplinary committee.

The stage now seems set for the septuagenarian Azad to begin a new innings.

The BJP, which has had a strong base in the Jammu-Udhampur region but lacks support in the Muslim-dominated Kashmir Valley, has been working hard to get friendly parties to win seats in the Valley. Though the BJP is said to have propped up a couple of small outfits like the Apni Party for the purpose, it is banking big on Azad's new party to make a serious dent on the two main players in the Kashmir Valley — the National Conference and the People's Democratic Party.

Altaf Bukhari's Apni Party (called the King's party in Kashmir for its proximity with the BJP), Sajjad Lone's People's Conference and Ghulam Nabi Azad's new party are expected to work in tandem to beat the big two in the Valley.

The process of delimitation of Assembly constituencies in J&K is underway and once it is completed, elections would be announced in the state.

Both the BJP and Azad's party would go into the election with the promise of restoration of statehood for J&K.

As the decision of statehood restoration would be taken by the Central government, the promise may help the BJP sweep elections in the Jammu-Udhampur region.

But that may not be enough to form the next government in J&K. A lot, therefore, would depend on the performance of Azad's party.

Sources say that the announcement of Padma Bhushan for Azad is just the beginning of the build-up. A slew of other measures are in the pipeline to pitch him at the centre of Valley politics.

With his plan to break away from the Congress finalised, Azad appears set to have the last laugh on the Congress joke that his parents named him Ghulam Nabi with the hope that he will be a servant (Ghulam) of the Prophet (Nabi) knowing little that he will end up being a servant of successive Congress presidents.

Not true, he can say now.

Ghulam Nabi Azad

Bouquets & brickbats

With the Centre tactically placing Ghulam Nabi Azad on the Padma list, the gulf between the G23 leaders in the Congress and the Gandhi family loyalists was back in focus. Kapil Sibal, Anand Sharma and Raj Babbar greeted Azad saying it was well deserved, but Jairam Ramesh urged him to reject the award P7

Ophthalmic society cautions docs against online aggregators

RANJANI MADHAVAN @ Bengaluru

CAUTIONING its doctor-members against tying up with online medical aggregator platforms, like Pristyn, Medfin, Practo and others, the Bangalore Ophthalmic Society (BOS) on Wednesday told them that these platforms are nothing but online touts.

The Society stated that it has written a letter to its members as it has noticed some doctors being approached, while others having already tied up with these online aggregators to gain patients. The Society said, "These platforms offer patients and charge a commission for the same. We wish to remind our members that not only is this unethical, it is also a violation of The Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations Act, 2002."

Explaining their grouse with these platforms, Dr YL Rajashekar, past president of BOS, said, "These aggregators act like middlemen taking commissions from doctors, similar to how Ola and Uber charge their drivers. This amounts to bribery. There are clear cut rules in the state and country, which say there can't be middlemen, between doctors and patients, taking profits. Here, the patient's interest is not kept in mind."

He said that initially, the service may appear to help patients, but later aggregators start guiding patients to hospitals where they can make bigger profits. Also, the commission that has to be paid to these aggregators squeezes hospitals and that affects the quality of treatment, he added.

"On online platforms, treatments are played out as one-time events. But in reality, surgeries and medical treatments involve preoperative and postoperative care. Good continuous care is essential. Patients have to exercise caution," he said.

The letter, signed by Society president Dr GV Divakar and secretary Dr Elankumaran P quoted a Section of the Act, which states that a physician shall not give, solicit or receive any gift, gratuity, commission or bonus. They also referred to another Section, which states that a physician shall not use touts or agents for procuring patients. P3

WHY THE PROTEST

The protesters are opposing the Railways' decision to hold the examination in two stages, saying the second stage for final selection is tantamount to cheating those who have cleared the first stage of the computer-based test, whose results were released on Jan 15

A train burns after it was set on fire at Gaya Junction in Bihar on Wednesday | PTI

Angry job aspirants set train on fire in Bihar; Railways suspends exams

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi / Patna

A passenger train was set on fire on Wednesday as hundreds of job aspirants stepped up their protest against the anomalies in the recent tests conducted by the Railway Recruitment Board for Non-Technical Popular Categories (NTPC). As protests entered the third day, an agitated crowd stormed the Gaya Junction, raising slogans, and set fire to the Bhabhua-Patna Inter City Express. Nobody was injured.

The protesters squatted on railway tracks, vandalised property, clashed with security forces and targeted trains, hitting services. In view of the protests, the Railways said it has suspended its NTPC and Level 1 exams. In a bid to calm frayed nerves, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw set up a high-level committee headed by Deepak Peter Gabriel, principal executive director of industrial relations in the ministry, to examine their grievances. Earlier, he ordered the postponement of the second stage of computer-based test of NTPC, which was slated to start from February 15 across India.

He also requested the job aspirants not to destroy public property. He said more than one crore people applied for 35,281 vacancies notified under the NTPC. "The Railways shortlisted 7,05,446 candidates for the second stage of computer-based test," the miniter added.

Wednesday's incident was a sequel to violent protests started in Patna, Bhojpur, Muzaffarpur, Buxar, Nalanda, Sitamarhi and other districts in the past three days.

In Uttar Pradesh, police arrested two persons and lodged a case against 1,000 unidentified people for allegedly rioting and blocking the train tracks.

BANNERGHATTA MAY HAVE THREE TIGERS

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

HERE is a piece of news that is exciting, but is also worrying. As per internal assessments and camera trap details, more than one tiger has been sighted in the Bannerghatta National Park (BNP). The fragmented habitat, which is at the tip of Western Ghats, connects Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary (CWS) and Tamil Nadu forest patches. It also abuts Bengaluru, a cosmopolitan and rapidly growing city.

"The first reported sighting of a wild tiger here was in 2015. Since then, it has been a wandering male. But now in the camera traps, two more tigers have been sighted. A healthy population of tigers has also been noticed in areas connecting CWS and BNP. In CWS, around 12 tigers have been recorded," said a senior official of the forest department.

It shows that if a habitat is left untouched, it bounces back and becomes home for the striped cats, the official added.

Since 2014, experts and conservationists have pointed out that the two forest patches are ideal potential spaces for tiger population and have stressed on effective conservation methods. But with rapid urbanisation, they face the threat of encroachment. Multiple cases of man-elephant conflicts and leopard sightings have been reported from the fringes of these patches.

BNP, especially, faces the threat of mining and encroachment for residential layout formation.

The state government has proposed to denotify and redefine the BNP buffer zone to make way for residential areas and industrialisation. CWS, meanwhile, could soon see a habitat change with the Mekedatu project.

CONTINUED ON: P5

MYSORE SILK

Saree burnt, consumer court tells shop to pay ex-judge's wife

YATHIRAJU @ Bengaluru

IF it is the saree of a judge's wife that you are servicing, you better take care. Here is a case of a consumer court ordering an outlet stitching saree borders to pay the full price of an expensive Mysore Silk saree and also bear the cost of damages and litigation expenses.

The Consumer Commission, in its recent order, directed the shop to compensate a retired district judge and his wife for damaging the saree that was given for stitching the border.

The Commission directed NC Divya of 'Divena Couture' to pay Rs 31,975 in total to retired District and Sessions Judge MS Evani and his wife Mangala Evani, including Rs 21,975, which is the cost of the saree, Rs 5,000 towards damages and Rs 5,000 for litigation expenses.

The judge and his wife produced the receipt of Rs 21,975 paid for the saree in August 2019, and also an acknowledgment from the shop that the saree and other clothes were received for stitching in October 2019.

But Divya contended that she received the silk saree from the complainants and as she was busy, kept it with other clothes without opening it.

When it was taken out for stitching the border, two burns were noticed and the staff from the shop immediately informed Mangala.

The Commission noted that it is the bounden duty of Divya to check the condition of the material received for stitching, and not looking into the damages at that time amounted to negligence on her part.

CONTINUED ON: P5

VAX PRICES

MAY BE CAPPED

The price of Covishield and Covaxin, which are expected to soon get regular market approval, is likely to be capped at Rs 275 per dose plus an additional service charge of Rs 150, sources said. P8

POMP AND PAGEANTRY

Indian Army's Rajput Regiment, wearing the uniform of 1950 and carrying .303 rifle, during the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on Wednesday; and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the National War Memorial | SHEKHAR YADAV

Governor lauds govt over handling Covid-19

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

COVID management and measures taken to contain the pandemic took the centre stage at the Republic Day celebrations in the city on Wednesday.

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, after unfurling the National Flag at Manekshaw Parade Grounds, said, "We are now facing the third wave. We should handle the situation with total seriousness and there is no room for negligence. The mantra of mask and social distancing must continue."

He appreciated the efforts of the state government in managing the Covid situation efficiently. Gehlot said the crisis has been used as an opportunity to build strengths and create additional infrastructure in the health sector.

He congratulated the government for developing and utilising technology in handling the pandemic through the formation of state war rooms, which recently received a national award. He commended medical professionals and other departments for managing the pandemic. P4

EXPRESS READ

Air India may be handed over to Tata Group today

New Delhi: The Centre is likely to hand over Air India to the Tata Group on Thursday, nearly 69 years after it was taken from the conglomerate, officials said. With this, Air India will be the third airline brand in the stable of the Tatas.

FIR filed against Google, its CEO over copyright

Mumbai: An FIR was registered against Google, its CEO Sundar Pichai and seven others over a film producer's plaint under the Copyright Act. Producer Suneel Darshan alleged that somebody uploaded the film 'Ek Hasina Thi Ek Diwana Tha' on YouTube, without its producers' permission.

Mysuru 'library man' rebuilds his dream, on his own labour

KARTHIK KK @ Mysuru

WITH the government failing to fulfill its promise of rebuilding his library that was gutted last year, 62-year-old daily wage labourer Syed Issaq has erected a shed-like structure on his own at the same place to house books that have been donated by hundreds of people.

As he himself was deprived of education, Issaq did not want others to suffer the same fate and had started the library over a decade ago. He had built the library in a 20x20 sqft space at the corner of a park near his house, spending money from his pocket. He had painstakingly collected over 11,000 books, including 3,000-plus Kannada novels and Bhagavad Gitas. His dream project was reduced to ashes on April 9 when a man walking by had carelessly tossed a cigarette butt.

After *TNIE* published a report about the fire, techie Fathaheen Misbah set up an online fundraiser which garnered a huge response from across the globe and collected nearly Rs 29 lakh within three to four days.

Visitors throng the rebuilt library in Mysuru on Wednesday | UDAYSHANKAR S

But the state government refunded all the donors and announced that considering the good work done by Issaq, it would rebuild the library. As months passed, there were no signs of any work being started by the Mysuru City Corporation, Mysuru Urban Development Authority, Public Libraries Department or the district administration, even as over 10,000 donated books were waiting to find a place.

Angry with the attitude of officials, Issaq decided to rebuild the library on his own from Rs 4 lakh donated by MLA Zameer Ahmed, Mysuru district incharge minister ST Somashekhar, Mysuru-Kodagu MP Pratap Simha and a few others. He rebuilt the shed-like structure for his library in 45 days flat. P6

NATIONWIDE	JAN 25	JAN 26
Fresh cases	2,35,874	2,85,914
Recoveries	2,67,753	2,99,073
Deaths	614	665

KARNATAKA	JAN 25	JAN 26
Fresh cases	41,400	48,905
Recoveries	53,093	41,699
Deaths	52	39

JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
January 25
51,64,473 doses
January 26
22,10,813 doses
TOTAL DOSES
1,63,49,62,688